

IMPRESSIONS OF PARLIAMENT

By J. T. Walton Newbold. M.P.

IT is a strange feeling for the first time to walk up the floor of the House of Commons, more especially when one is the first elected representative of a Party formed and in process of systematic organisation, for the purpose of effecting in this country the most drastic transformation in all its long line of revolutionary historical precedents.

The entire ceremonial associated with the opening of a new Parliament is calculated to lend to the political structure of the property-owners' state an air of mystery and of solemnity such as may well impress with feelings of reverential awe many a trade union official or petit-bourgeois Socialist.

This is essentially a land of traditions, of precedents, and nowhere are they kept up more circumspectly than in the Houses of Parliament. There is a veneer of courtesy assumed by our governing class, an air of studied impartiality. No wonder that it has "taken in" many a good rebel, many a potential revolutionary.

To me, from the policeman at the gate, who salutes me with a smile of beaming camaraderie, to Mr. Speaker, who is personally instructing me on Parliamentary procedure and with whom I have occasional chats on a common hobby of the study of constitutional history and the personalities who have played their part therein, the functionaries of what Sir Courtney Ilbert, late Clerk to the House, described as "a museum of antiquities," have presented the fairest face.

That is what I expected. The British governing class does things that way. Its mascot is the smiling policeman!

But really, to take a step into the Dark Ages, really to look back into the misty beginnings of things temporal, it is necessary to attend upon His Most Gracious Majesty in "the Most High Court of Parliament."

This "Most High Court," which, alone, is Parliament in session, only exists when King, Lords and Commons are present together. It is a relic of the feudal age. There sits the lineal descendant of Cedric, the direct descendant of the One Eyed All Father Odin, duly baptised, anointed and dubbed "Defender of the Faith,"—a title retained by a heretic prince.

There, under the burden of the jewel encrusted Imperial Crown, in his Robes of State, sits George the Fifth and—poor old King—by his side, grimly majestic, Mary the Four-Fifths.

Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen Consort seemed to be qualifying for a music-hall artiste, one of those performers who, being duly tied up, miraculously free themselves from their chains, thongs and padlocks. She was laced this way and that in chains of pearls and diamonds—till I wondered how the poor dear would ever get out of them again. "Espoir" notwithstanding, Him to whom I have affirmed that I will bear "true allegiance" is a sight to behold and to marvel in and at.

"All the Britons," remember, are incarnate in our Sovereign Lord—the King. He is you, I and the other fellow, glorified and—oh King, Live for Ever—but words fail me!

Would that the fairy, good or bad, would have put the whole bag of tricks to sleep and kept them so as an object lesson to the children of all posterity of the way in which their forefathers, 1922 pattern, dealt with the Unemployed Problem! I have been to the Land of Make Believe.

I have been wafted in a magic ballot box from Watsonville to Westminster, from Cowie Square to the High Court of Parliament.

I wish I could put King George at the Calder St. Bureau for a week and Queen Mary into Ravenscraig.

I fear I am becoming a fanatical Christian and desire, like another Mary, to put down the mighty from their seats and exalt them of low degree—all of which will set the Hamilton Presbytery and the Kirk Minister of the Parish of Dalziel, in the Burgh of Motherwell, off on another crusade against "Communism and Atheism."